THE FUTURE OF BOHEMIA

A LECTURE DELIVERED AT KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON, IN HONOUR OF THE QUINCENTENARY OF JOHN HUS

BY

R. W. SETON-WATSON

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THE FUTURE OF BOHEMIA

IGNORANCE of Bohemia has been a tradition in this country ever since the days when Shakespeare wrecked a certain famous ship upon its imaginary coasts. Yet in those days Bohemia still possessed an independent existence as one of the chief kingdoms of Christendom. By a still stranger confusion the word "Bohemian" has come to be associated with the Latin Quarter, and has thus acquired a peculiar, and a peculiarly misleading, flavour. It is right that in this year the memory of Bohemia should be revived, not merely because we hope that Bohemia may rise phœnix-like from the great European conflagration, but because the 6th of July serves to remind us of Bohemia's greatest citizen, and of Bohemia's greatest achievement in the history of Europe. On that day five hundred years ago, John Hus was burnt at the stake at the Council of Constance.

Till very recently it was the fashion to deride things Slavonic, as uncivilized and barbarous. The best answer to this—quite apart from the triumphs of Russian musical, literary, and dramatic genius which are no longer unfamiliar

to us to-day—is to point to the existence, in the very heart of Europe, surrounded by hostile influences, of a highly cultured, democratic, progressive, Slavonic nation, the Czechs of Bohemia. It is right to remember on the anniversary of Hus, that the Slavs, as well as the Latin and Germanic races, contributed to the Reformation movement which was to transform Europe and the world, both from a religious and from a national point of view. Nowhere are the three dominant factors of modern life—religion, nationality, and economics—more strongly marked than in the history of Bohemia. At such a time as the present there can be no desire to give an aggressive turn to such an anniversary, or to exploit it in a way that might offend those of different religious views; but we cannot, surely, be blamed for using the occasion for the expression of our admiration and reverence.

In the following pages no attempt is made to provide an adequate survey of Bohemian history, but merely to indicate the broad lines of Bohemia's development, ruin, and national revival, as an essential preliminary to understanding its tragic situation at the present day.

For three centuries Bohemia has ceased to figure on the map of Europe as an independent State; but no atlas which attempts to reproduce the physical features of the various countries can hope to efface the marks of her geographical unity. Her lozenge-shaped plateau with its fringe of mountains stands out boldly from the

surrounding countries. The Riesengebirge, the Erzgebirge, the Bohemian forest hem her in almost upon three sides, and even on the south and south-east there are clear lines of demarcation. The strategic importance of this natural fortress has long been a commonplace with military students; indeed, the phrase, "The master of Bohemia will be the master of Europe," is far more plausible than the parallel dictum of Napoleon I about Constantinople. The famous Panslavist, General Fadejev, knew what he was about, when forty-five years ago he wrote, "Without Bohemia the Slav cause is for ever lost; it is the head, the advance-guard of all Slavs."

Geographical unity Bohemia has, but *racial* unity has been denied to her. For centuries Bohemia has been inhabited by two rival races, the Czechs and the Germans, and has formed one of the chief battle-grounds between the Slav and the Teutonic idea. Into the vexed question, which of the two races has priority or formed the true majority in earlier centuries, we need not enter. Much has been made of such arguments on both sides; but in reality it is quite as immaterial as the similar question whether the Roumanians were in possession of Transylvania before the Magyars, or the Magyars before the Roumanians. In the one case, as in the other, both races have been there so long that no one is entitled to regard either of them as inferiors or interlopers.

For our present purpose it is sufficient to note that as early as the seventh century there already was a Czech State, periodically at war with the neighbouring German tribes and varying greatly in extent and territory with every generation. Under the national Slav dynasty of the Přemysls it was gradually consolidated; two princes of that house acquired the kingly title, but it was not till the very end of the twelfth century that Bohemia finally became a kingdom. In the thirteenth century Ottokar of Bohemia (1253-78) was also Duke of Austria and Styria, until he was overthrown and stripped of his German provinces by Rudolf of Habsburg, the founder of the Austrian Imperial family.

But the heroic era of Bohemia lies in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, first under a French dynasty, the Kings of the House of Luxemburg, and later under a national King, elected from the ranks of her own nobility. The outstanding feature of this period, as of earlier and later periods of Bohemian history, is the perennial racial struggle between Czech and German.

In passing, it may be worth while pointing out that the Prince of Wales's plumes, so familiar to us as an emblem, were won upon the battle-field of Crecy from the blind King John of Bohemia, after he had fallen in a mad but gallant charge. John's son and successor Charles, who was also Emperor, won for Bohemia a position of European importance. Under his wise and

prosperous rule the Bohemian capital first received the name of "Golden Prague"—a name still accepted with enthusiasm by every visitor to that fascinating blend of mediæval, rococo, and modern art. In 1348 Charles founded the University of Prague, which with striking rapidity acquired an academic rank not unworthy of its elder sisters Bologna, Paris, and Oxford. It was the first University to be founded in the whole German and Slavonic world, and it was here, fittingly enough, that the first great conflict of two widely differing cultures was to be fought out.

That the Czechs triumphed over their German rivals, was largely due to the genius of one man, John Hus, who as priest of the Bethlehem Chapel in Prague and Rector of the University, had won to a rare degree the confidence and admiration of his fellow-countrymen.

Any attempt to tell the story of John Hus would lead us far beyond the limits of the present essay; it will be sufficient to indicate the main features of his remarkable career.

1. The Bohemian movement for reform had, in its origin, not the slightest tinge of anti-Papal feeling. It began with protests against the gross immorality and worldliness of the Bohemian clergy, especially in Prague itself. Hus was by no means as great a heretic as is sometimes imagined. He of course suffered, like every public man in his century, from the gross scurrilities and deliberate misrepresentations of his

enemies, which were not so easily refuted before the days of printing as in later days. But it is certain that he accepted all the main dogmas of the Roman Church. For example, the view so fiercely held by the theologians of that day and so often challenged by subsequent reformers, that the unworthiness of the priest does not affect the validity of the sacrament, was never challenged by Hus, and indeed was more than once publicly affirmed by him. Englishmen may well be proud of Wycliffe's influence upon Hus; but that influence was almost certainly less dogmatic than practical. In a famous message to his own congregation of the Bethlehem Chapel he referred to "Blessed England," but it would seem that his admiration for Wycliffe sprang from his zeal for the purification of the Church from existing abuses, not from any desire to overthrow the existing order of the ecclesiastical world. It can be, and has been, quite seriously argued that Hus never questioned any dogma which had obtained the sanction of the Church up to his day; Papal Infallibility, which he did challenge, was of course widely upheld even in the fifteenth century, but was not erected into a dogma till 1870. But on the other hand no one can pretend to deny that his whole influence, the whole trend of his life and teachings was contrary to the Papal claims, and in favour of what afterwards came to be known as the Reformation. Luther rightly regarded Hus as his forerunner, and on a famous occasion exclaimed, "We have all been Hussites, without knowing it."

Just as at a later date Knox could say of the first martyr of the Scottish Reformation, "The reek of Maister Patrick Hamilton has infected all it blew upon," so it is worth noting that the teaching of Hus, which at the time found its fiercest opponents among the Germans, none the less a century later inspired the great religious movement which revivified Germany. Time brings its revenges, and to-day the English, who burnt the Maid of France, and the Scots, who fought for her, unite in honouring her statue at Rouen. May we not, also at the anniversary of Waterloo, express the hope that ere long, as the result of a just and lasting settlement, the secular hates of German and Czech may be merged in a new enthusiasm for the cause of common civilization?

I have written as an ardent and convinced admirer of Hus the reformer as well as Hus the patriot. But I wish to make it clear that in admiring that side of him, I have not even the remotest wish to offend the Catholic sentiments of the majority of his countrymen of to-day. They have shown only too clearly that those who differ from him on religious matters can still revere him as a great national hero.

At a time when in England increased interest is being shown in the Russian Orthodox Church, it may be well to refer to the curious fact that in Russia Hus is very widely regarded as "Pravoslav" or Orthodox in his views and aims. The accuracy of this view has been

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challenged, and indeed refuted, by all the leading Czech historians from Palacky and Tomek to Count Lützow. There is no trace whatever of Russian or Eastern influence upon Hus. But the origin of the idea is distinctly interesting. Christianity first came to Bohemia and Moravia from the East, through the great Slavonic apostles, Saints Cyril and Methodius, who began their career as missionaries of Byzantium, and then drifted into the Roman sphere. Methodius was Archbishop of Nitra, the old Slovak town in North-west Hungary, in the ninth century. It is also significant that the celibacy of the clergy and the withdrawal of the chalice from the laity became established at a considerably later date in Bohemia than in the rest of Western Christendom.

2. The movement inspired and inaugurated by John Hus was quite as much national as it was religious in character. The Czechs were for reform, the Germans for reaction and the Papal supremacy. This is the secret of Hus's great popularity at the present day, when his portrait may be seen on the walls of many a devout Catholic priest and Protestants form but an insignificant minority among his admirers. And indeed, his services to the national cause of Bohemia can hardly be exaggerated. What Luther did for the German language, Hus did a whole century earlier for the Czech language. Hus's writings are epoch-making not only in the history of Czech literature, but in Slavonic history

as a whole. In addition to revising and correcting the existing Czech translations of the Bible, he wrote at least as much in Czech as in Latin, then still the usual medium for works of a theological nature. In yet another respect he was a linguistic pioneer; he was the first to attempt a reform of Slavonic orthography according to a logical system.

A further interesting parallel to Luther is the stress laid by Hus upon church music, and especially upon congregational singing. This was natural enough among a nation of musicians, the Czechs and the Welsh being perhaps the two most musical nations in Europe. The Hussite songs, the hymns of the reformer's own lifetime and the religious battle songs of his more warlike successors, occupy a unique place of their own alike in musical and in political history.

Hus, then, was equally great as reformer and as patriot, as the inspirer of an intellectual movement and as the political leader of a nation. For five hundred years he has stood as the foremost champion of Czech nationality and the Czech language, and he also deserves some credit as one of the earliest advocates of Slav unity. The letter of congratulation which he addressed to King Vladislaw of Poland after his great victory over the Teutonic Knights at Tannenberg (1410) is not without interest at a moment when the Germans claim to have wiped out that national disaster, but when we still confidently hope that a final Russian victory will seal the reconciliation

of Pole and Russian as brothers in the cause of Slavonic unity. The heroic achievement of John Hus has been well characterized in the words of his countryman and biographer, Count Lützow: "If neglecting for a moment the minutiæ of mediæval theological controversy, we consider as a martyr that man who willingly sacrifices his individual life for what he firmly believes to be the good of humanity at large, who 'takes the world's life on him and his own lays down,' then assuredly there is no truer martyr in the world's annals than John Hus."

The Hussite Wars, which followed the tragedy of Constance, are one of the most remarkable episodes in history and especially deserving of attention at the present time. The Bohemian nation, alone and unaided, held all Europe at bay for close upon twenty years, and routed army after army which the Germans sent against them. There have been moments in history—it is necessary to emphasize this to-day—when the German spirit has led the van of Europe. But on the occasion of the Hussite Wars, as in the present European tragedy, Germany unquestionably stood for reaction and for the imposition of an alien "Kultur." To-day the legions of Bohemia are forced unwillingly, by a foul and unnatural system, to fight the battles of their deadliest enemies. But surely we are entitled to believe that the spirit of John Žižka, the heroic blind general of the Czechs, is fighting on our side to-day, and to hope that the nation

which through his victories did so much to secure the intellectual freedom and progress of Europe, will ere long be in a position to pursue once more its independent existence.

The Hussite Wars were fought for an idea, for an abstraction—on the religious side, for the Communion in both kinds ; on the civil side, for the rights of the Czech language against the encroachments of the German. These two ideal aims combined made Bohemia irresistible. What people in Europe can boast a prouder title than that which the Czechs won during the long Hussite struggle—"the People of the Chalice"? Bohemia's greatest historian, Francis Palacky, may surely be pardoned for putting forward the contention that the Hussite War is "the first war in the world's history that was fought not for material interests, but for intellectual ones, for ideas." Certain it is that when victory at last crowned the Hussite arms, they made a moderate use of it, and indulged in no revenge or proscription of the beaten side. The Taborites, it is true, showed the same excess of religious zeal as the sectaries of Cromwell's day. But the Utraquists, as the victorious champions of the Communion in both kinds came to be called, set a worthy example of tolerance in an intolerant age.

How different was the behaviour of the triumphant Romanist party two centuries later, after the great tragedy of Bohemian history, the battle of the White Mountain (1620)! The

Thirty Years' War, it will be remembered, opened in Bohemia, with the sensational incident known as the "Defenestration of Prague," the brief interlude of the Elector Palatine's kingship and his defeat and expulsion by the Imperialists in that memorable battle outside the walls of Prague. His wife, the Winter Queen, daughter of our own James I, still holds her own place in English literature as "the eclipse and glory of her kind."

The victor of the White Mountain, the fanatical Ferdinand II of Habsburg, set himself to exterminate heresy from his dominions. He expelled the preachers and introduced the Jesuits. Utraquism was sternly suppressed. The ancient Bohemian nobility was to a large extent destroyed and replaced by foreign upstarts. Above all, systematic efforts were made to destroy Czech national literature, owing to its Hussite tinge. Indeed, one Jesuit boasted that he alone had burnt no fewer that sixty thousand Czech volumes. Ferdinand acted only too literally upon the advice of his Capuchin confessor, to show no mercy to the Bohemians, but to comply with the words of the Psalmist: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Thanks to the tyranny of the Habsburgs and their Jesuit advisers, the condition of Bohemia was one of utter stagnation from the Thirty Years' War down to the second quarter of the

nineteenth century. All national life was in abeyance. Bohemia was completely Germanized, bound hand and foot by the red tape of an indolent and brainless bureaucracy, by the intellectual and moral censorship of the Church, the Jesuits, and the police system.

Early in the nineteenth century a tiny group of Slav patriots was in the habit of meeting at intervals in the private room of an inn in Prague; and one of them, Rieger, remarked to his friends, "If the ceiling of this room were to fall and crush us, there would be an end of the national movement in Bohemia." And this was scarcely an exaggeration; for in Bohemia, as in many other countries, a handful of idealists and theorists—for the most part historical students and professors of literature—sowed the seed which a generation later was to awaken a whole race. The Society of the Bohemian Museum, founded in 1818, aimed at a revival of the national language; and it is worth noting that at first there was no feud with the Germans. Goethe was himself an honoured member, and the poets Lenau and Meissner wrote in honour of the Hussites. It was not until the Czech revival assumed an openly Slavophil form, that the enthusiasm of the Germans cooled down.

It is important to note that the Panslav movement, in its most ideal form, as an expression of the kinship and brotherhood of all the different Slavonic races, originated quite as much in Bohemia as in Russia. Its earliest mouthpiece,

Jan Kollár, who was clergyman of the Slovak Lutheran Church in Budapest, wrote two epoch-making books—a long epic poem entitled "The Daughter of Slava," in which he sang the glories of Slavdom and created, in imitation of Dante, a mythical Slav Olympus and Hades, where the friends and enemies of the Slav race are picturesquely grouped, and a short essay advocating "The Literary Reciprocity of all Slavs." Both books awakened a resounding echo throughout the Slav world. About the same time another Slovak, Šafářík, a professor in Prague, wrote an equally epoch-making book on "Slav Antiquities," which has remained the foundation stone of all study of Slav origins, whether in the matter of language, geography, or race.

The literary movement in Prague steadily gathered force, and acquired a political tinge which all the efforts of the police failed to efface. The Czech press came to life, and—as all references to internal Bohemian politics were as carefully muzzled by the censorship of the forties as they are to-day in the existing reign of terror—one of their most brilliant journalists, Havlíček, contrived to criticize the Government in the skilfully veiled form of reports on the condition of *Ireland*!

In the great year of revolution, 1848, the growing Slav movement found expression in a Slav Congress held in Prague, with the great Czech historian Francis Palacky as President and

with delegates from Poland, Serbia, Croatia, the Slovak districts, and even Russia. Palacky earned the ill-will of the German extremists by his refusal to take part in the German Federal Parliament at Frankfurt. But he very rightly held that Austria's sole hope for the future lay in the introduction of a federal system, and this he advocated till the very end of his life. A famous saying of his has found its way through Europe and has formed the text of many edifying sermons upon Austria (I too must plead guilty to having used it more than once myself): "If there were no Austria, it would be necessary to create one." The root meaning of such a phrase has been all too often overlooked; Palacky regarded the continued existence of Austria as the sole means of avoiding a European cataclysm. But now that such a cataclysm has actually come upon us, surely we shall do well to remember another winged word applied by Palacky to his native Bohemia: "Before Austria was, we were, and when Austria no longer is, we still shall be." Surely a prophetic phrase.

Since 1848 the national movement in Bohemia has steadily and irresistibly progressed. Its weakest side has always been the political. The Czechs have produced a very large number of able leaders of the second and third ranks, but not a single one of supreme eminence, and what is most important of all, no one at all comparable to the really great men whom their Magyar contemporaries produced, Deák, Kossuth, and And-

rássy. The inevitable result has been that the Czechs have wasted many golden opportunities and have been forestalled by other races, notably the Magyars and the Poles. They have allowed themselves to squander time and energy over barren linguistic brawls, to overdo the policy of the mere wrecker and obstructionist, and so to destroy their prestige and reputation for political foresight both at home and abroad. Meanwhile their progress in other fields than politics has been altogether admirable. They have developed a rich and attractive literature, with at least two poets of the front rank, Svatopluk Cech and Vrhlicky, as well as numerous novelists, dramatists, historians, and men of science. Their system of education is highly efficient, and worthy of the tradition of their own Comenius (Komensky), one of the greatest educationalists of modern times. To-day there are two Universities in Prague, a German and a Czech, the latter with more students than Oxford and Cambridge combined, and some professors of European fame. In Bohemia and Moravia to-day there are practically no illiterates.

In drama the Czechs are also well to the fore. The National Theatre at Prague is one of the best of its kind in Europe; indeed, to many chance visitors the existence of this splendid Slavonic theatre must have been something of a revelation. Still more is this true of music, for which the Czechs are justly celebrated. They and their half-brothers the Slovaks are extra-

ordinarily rich in folksongs and melodies, many of which show obvious traces of the ancient Slavonic church modes. Moreover, they have produced several composers of the very front rank, notably Dvořák, who is famous throughout Europe, and Smetana, who is less known but equally great and is indeed regarded as the most characteristic of all Czech composers. Novák, Fibich, and other younger composers have also won the attention of the musical world, and it is almost superfluous to mention that Kubelik, the famous violinist, is a native of Bohemia. Prague is a famous centre of music and of art; and though it is impossible to point to any Czech artist of altogether European reputation, all visitors to the modern Gallery of Prague and to the annual exhibitions of the various art societies, are aware that Art is on a higher level in Prague than in many cities more famous in the artistic world. And at least a word of praise should be reserved for the brilliant group of Moravian artists, which has rallied round the great Slovak peasant-artist Joza Uprka and has made of their art pavilion at Hodonín a shrine of popular art and an inspiration for the artistic development of the future. "Uprka red" has to be seen to be believed, and nowhere can it be seen to better advantage than in the prosperous Slovak villages of the Moravian border.

Bohemia and Silesia form to-day the chief industrial centre of Austria. Bohemian glass, sugar, and textiles have won something more than

local fame; and so too the famous beer of Pilsen, and that other less innocuous product of the same town, the armaments of the great Skoda works. It is the rapid growth of Bohemian mining industries and manufactures which has so seriously complicated the racial struggle between Czech and German. So long as the population remained more or less rooted to the soil, there was at least the possibility of mapping out the mixed districts and settling upon their special treatment. But with a population kept in a state of continual ebb and flow by industrial developments, minorities are continually cropping up in unexpected places and then again disappearing; and it is unfortunately the case that both Czech and German employers put very considerable pressure on their workmen in a national sense. In short, economics and nationality are inextricably interwoven in Bohemia, just as in Hungary, Roumania, and the Balkans.

The present political and constitutional regime in Austria-Hungary dates from the famous Ausgleich or Compromise of 1867, by which the fate of ten races was surrendered into the hands of two, the Germans and the Magyars, one in each half of the "Dual Monarchy." Against this system the Czechs of all parties have always vigorously protested, insisting on the claims of the historic crown and kingdom of St. Wenceslas as entitled to at least as much consideration as the Hungarian Crown of St. Stephen. There was indeed a moment, during

the Franco-German War, when the present Emperor seemed inclined to atone for his neglect of Czech interests and was on the point of being crowned King of Bohemia. But the Magyars immediately strained every effort to withhold from the Slavs the rights which they had so persistently and successfully claimed for themselves; and from that day to this Francis Joseph has always evaded his plighted word to Bohemia.

The protests of the Czechs have gained steadily in strength and volume, as the current of their national life broadened and deepened; and a year ago the Czechs might fairly have been described as a highly organized, highly educated, keen, hardworking democracy, perhaps sometimes needlessly aggressive, perhaps also short-sighted or narrow in its political outlook, but none the less progressive and modern in the very best sense of those words.

Their national attitude in home politics is reflected in their attitude to Foreign Policy. The Czechs have always been pronounced and outspoken opponents of Viennese policy, and still more of the poisonous influence of Budapest and of Magyar racial tyranny upon that policy. They have always opposed Prussia, Berlin, and the Triple Alliance by every means in their power. Public opinion in Bohemia has always been consistently Francophil and Anglophil, and above all Russophil, emphasizing the kinship and blood ties of all the Slav races. In 1870 it sympathized keenly with France, in 1878 with Russia and

her noble struggle for the liberation of the Balkans, for opposing which Britain is to-day paying so terribly in blood and treasure. In 1908 it sympathized equally with Serbia during the Bosnian crisis; for it should be noted that Prague has long been a very important centre of Southern Slav culture, to which hundreds of Serb, Croat, and Bulgar students flock every year. In 1912 there was no country where the victories of the Balkan League aroused greater delight than in Prague; and to-day it is scarcely an exaggeration to assert that every man, woman, and child in Bohemia sympathizes with Russia, and longs for the victory of Russia and her Western allies, as Bohemia's only hope of salvation. As a famous Bohemian put it to me during the war, even the Austrian police spies in Prague—so far as they are of Czech nationality—would welcome the Russians! And these are the people who, like their Serb, Croat, and Slovene kinsmen in the south of Austria-Hungary, are being compelled by a brutal and perverse system to fight the battles of Berlin, Vienna, and Budapest, to pay the bill run up by the crimes and follies of German-Magyar policy, to sacrifice thousands of their best sons, fighting against their own kinsmen and friends, against all their dearest traditions and aspirations. Hideous as has been the fate of Belgium and of unconquerable Serbia, it may safely be asserted that in this war the most hideous fate of all has been reserved for the Czechs, Slovaks,

Poles, and Serbo-Croats of the Dual Monarchy, who are fighting under compulsion a war that is to them a civil war, and that from a national point of view, by far the greatest crime of the central Powers has been their ruthless exploitation of thirty millions of their subject races in a quarrel which is not theirs.

To-day the situation in Bohemia is altogether intolerable. Espionage and censorship are so complete, that no one makes any comment in public. The newsboards and public notices are read in silence. Two men do not discuss the war, unless they are certain that no stranger is within earshot. The newspapers are of course completely muzzled, and are even forced to print communications with the contents of which they notoriously disagree. The editorial staffs and the general public alike have become adepts at the practice of writing, and reading, between the lines and at the art of skilful omission and indirect allusion.

Political life has of course been completely suspended. As neither the Austrian Parliament nor the provincial Diets are allowed to meet, there is no parliamentary immunity. The party leaders are under the closest observation and have to be extremely careful. Early in the war the authorities made great efforts to induce the Czech parties to publish a manifesto in favour of war, but entirely without success. All remained ominously silent. Bohemia has two political leaders of the highest standing—Dr.

Kramář, the Young Czech leader, an ardent Russophil, a tireless opponent of the Triple Alliance, and one of the spiritual authors of the so-called Neoslav movement, and Professor Masaryk, the famous philosopher who has exercised so remarkable an influence over the whole younger generation of progressives in all the different Slavonic countries, and who is also well-known for his courageous exposure of the methods of forgery, espionage, and provocation pursued by the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office in the Agram High Treason trial and the even more notorious Friedjung trial. It was rumoured last August that both these men had been executed; but happily this was a mere invention of the sensational Press. Till recently the only prominent Czech politician to be arrested was Mr. Klofač, the National Socialist deputy, who was implicated on the strength of compromising letters written to him from Switzerland—it is asserted, by Austrian *agents provocateurs*. At the end of May Dr. Kramář and Dr. Scheiner, the President of the Bohemian Sokol (Gymnastic) Societies, were also arrested.

Among the Czech regiments of the Austrian Army the feeling is more or less openly Russophil. It is sufficient to cite a remarkable incident which took place in Prague itself at the beginning of last autumn. One of the Prague regiments left for the Galician front, escorted on its way by a large and sympathetic crowd, soldiers and civilians singing together their national songs, and

above all the famous Panslav hymn "Hej Slovani," which contains a verse in honour of the Russians and the French as friends in the struggle against the Germans. Not content with this, they carried before them a white banner bearing as an inscription an extra verse written for the same hymn, to the effect that "we are marching against the Russians, but nobody knows why." So strong was the feeling of both the soldiers and the crowd, that the officers of the regiment did not venture to remove the banner. But the incident was atoned for by an order which decimated the regiment when it arrived at the front. Other instances of summary executions in the Czech regiments have been known to occur throughout the course of the war; and it is a notorious fact that the Czech soldiers surrender whenever an opportunity presents itself and are utterly averse to the idea of fighting either Russia or Serbia. Equally characteristic is the fact that Bohemia is garrisoned almost exclusively by Magyar and Roumanian troops, and by German second-line troops from the Empire.

A few words must be devoted in conclusion to Bohemia's aspirations for the future—aspirations which can only be realized if the Allies are completely victorious. If Germany wins, Bohemia becomes a mere annexe of Berlin. To-day that ought to be clear enough to every one; and there is certainly no Czech who fails to realize it.

Bohemia, then, hopes that our victory will

mean the break-up of the Dual Monarchy and the achievement of Bohemian independence. Independent Bohemia, if it can once be achieved, will not be by any means a mere negligible quantity. Comprising the greater part of the three Austrian provinces of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia—what is left of the territories of the mediæval Crown of St. Wenceslas—and also the Slovak districts of Northern Hungary, Bohemia would possess a population of not less than eleven or twelve millions, and would thus occupy the eighth place among the twenty-two States of Europe. And here it is necessary to point out that with the fate of Bohemia is inseparably bound up the fate of their close kinsmen the Slovaks, one of the most naturally gifted and attractive of all the Slavonic races, whose political and intellectual development has for generations past been brutally stunted by the deliberate policy of the Magyar oligarchy. Their language has been banished from all secondary schools, colleges and seminaries, and is being steadily expelled even from the primary schools. It is excluded from the administration and from every public office; even on the railways and in the post offices Slovak inscriptions are not tolerated. The Slovak Press has for years been subject to brutal persecution. Right of assembly or association does not exist for the unhappy Slovaks, or indeed for the other non-Magyar races of Hungary. The small intellectual class is the victim of official pressure and persecution in every imaginable

form; and the most drastic steps are taken to prevent the Slovak people from securing its due representation in Parliament. Nowhere has the scandalous system of electoral corruption and violence weighed more heavy than among the Slovaks. As a distinguished Hungarian statesman said not many years ago on the floor of the House, "In Hungary the Magyar is the master." The other races are mere helots.

It is to perpetuate this infamous system that the Magyar oligarchy, under the able leadership of Count Tisza, is fighting this war; and it can hardly be wondered at that every Czech and Slovak should approve the rival programme of Bohemian independence. The difficulties which lie in the way of such a programme are many and obvious. The new State would be seriously handicapped by the lack of a seaboard, just as are Switzerland and Serbia to-day. This insurmountable geographical fact would unquestionably be the occasion of tariff difficulties. But it must be remembered that even before the war Bohemia and Moravia, which industrially possessed a special identity of their own, suffered seriously from the economic disadvantages of their situation. The attainment of their independence may not enable them to overcome all these disadvantages, but it is obvious that at the worst the Czechs can scarcely be worse off when they have complete economic and financial control of their own destinies and are thus able to consult their own peculiar interests, than in their

present situation, when in all matters economic and political alike the main decision lies at Vienna and Budapest rather than at Prague.

A further obvious difficulty is presented by the future form of government of the new State. For many reasons, notably out of deference to the feelings of the Russian Government, a Czech Republic is quite impracticable, but in restoring the ancient Kingdom of Bohemia, the Czechs have no national dynasty to whom they can turn. A German prince is of course out of the question, and they may perhaps experience some difficulty in finding a suitable candidate for the new throne among the reigning families of the West.

There can be no question that the new Bohemia would for a considerable period need backing from without. Her people would look above all to Russia; for, though nothing is farther from their wishes than to become a province of Russia, they are certain to remain Russophil after the war, and to desire an intimate accord with Russia. If the war produces the hoped for reconciliation between Russians and Poles, the Czechs are likely to prove a useful intermediary, in view of their community of outlook as Western Slavs. Above all, racial sympathies and a close community of economic interests are likely to link Bohemia with the new Jugoslav State which, it is to be hoped, will be formed by the union of Croatia, Dalmatia, and Bosnia with Serbia and Montenegro. Bohemia, like Jugoslavia, will alike by inclination and by necessity be the ally of the

Triple Entente and a powerful obstacle in the path of German aggression.

The chief difficulty which will face the new State is the problem of racial minorities: for in the event of Bohemian independence it will inevitably include at least a million and a half Germans.

There are, of course, certain points at which the existing frontier can be pared down, leaving certain German districts, such as the Egerland, the territory round Bodenbach, or South of Budweis, to German-Austria, to Bavaria, or to Saxony, and along the Silesian frontier similar concessions could be made to the racial principle. But this is unhappily impossible in *North* Bohemia, where the new State, if it is to be self-sufficient and economically independent, must of necessity hold on to the mining and industrial districts and where the existence of numerous Czech minorities cannot be overlooked. But this difficulty of racial minorities must not deter us. It is present almost everywhere in central and south-eastern Europe, and there is not a single problem which the war has raised, that can be solved in defiance of it. The best that we can do is to educate public opinion to oppose strenuously the suppression of national minorities, and to make a guarantee of linguistic rights in the schools, churches, local bodies and cultural institutions a *sine qua non* in the settlement of each individual problem. The Germans of Bohemia and Southern Hungary must be secured the same

privileges as the Magyars in the future Greater Roumania. Such an arrangement is difficult, but most certainly attainable.

The Southern Slav Question has already forced itself upon the attention of the world. The time will soon come when the Bohemian Question will assume an equal importance, and it is therefore essential to realize that the two problems are intimately connected and likely to be more so every day. The interests of the Czechs and of the Southern Slavs coincide at every point.

Forty-five years ago a far-sighted Russian wrote as follows: "The Eastern Question is not to be solved in the Balkans, nor the Polish Question in Warsaw, nor the Black Sea Question on the Bosphorus. All three are held together by a common knot, which lies on the middle Danube. The Eastern Question can only be solved in Vienna," and again "The Eastern Question is a Slav Question." It is interesting to find the same writer discussing the possible enemies of Russia in the future. First on the list is England —there for once we have happily proved him wrong. The Poles he regards as doubtful— "whether we have the Poles for us or against us, depends on us Russians, and on us alone." What could be more prophetic than this? It is even truer in 1915 than it was in 1870. But above all he regards as Russia's future enemies "the Germans with their allies, the Turks and the Magyars." "To Russia," he adds, "Hungary forms the advance-guard of Germany." That has

long been obvious to all serious students of Hungarian politics; and yet it has still not penetrated the minds of some of those who are loudest in their denunciation of Germany to-day. It cannot be too often repeated that this is not merely a German War; it is emphatically a Magyar War also. None know this better than the Cezchs and the Slovaks.

Bohemia is called upon in the near future to play a great part as intermediary between Russia and Britain. As the most advanced and cultured of all the Slav nations, she can present to Russia the ideas of the West in suitable Slavonic garb. As an ardent and sympathetic admirer of Russia and Russian ideas, she may well become to us a door upon the Slavonic world. There will be room in the new Europe of which we dream for an independent Bohemia, industrious, progressive, and peaceful, a Bohemia which will have rescued its Slovak kinsmen from the intolerable yoke of the Magyar oligarchy, but which will carefully avoid the Magyar example and give the fullest freedom to its own German minorities. The day has not yet arrived, but it will most assuredly come, if victory crowns the arms of the Allies. In the words of Bismarck, "Bohemia is a fortress created by God Himself." But she must become the fortress, not of Reaction, but of Liberty.

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